

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, WB

SUBJECT: CURRENT WAVE OF SELF-CRITICISM IN
BERLIN SPD

1. SUMMARY: BERLIN SPD, STUNG BY ELECTORAL REVERSES IN MARCH AND EVIDENCE OF MISMANAGEMENT BY BERLIN OFFICIALS WHO HAVE HELD POSITIONS BECAUSE OF SPD AFFILIATION, HAS BEEN ENGAGED IN RECENT WEEKS IN WAVE OF SELF-CRITICISM. THIS CAME TO FORE AT BERLIN SPD PARTY CONGRESS DEC 13 AT WHICH LEADING OFFICIAL CALLED UPON SENATORS TO RELINQUISH THEIR PARTY ROLES IN INTEREST OF BETTER MANAGEMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. MISOFF WAS INFORMED IN CONFIDENCE BY CHIEF OF SENAT CHANCELLERY HERZ ON DEC 16 THAT FOR PAST FEW WEEKS BERLIN SPD HAS BEEN ENGAGED IN SERIESHOF MEETINGS AT WHICH MEMBER WERE ENCOURAGED TO TAKE CRITICAL VIEW OF PARTY AND ANALYZE REASONS FOR POLITICAL REVERSES AT LAST MARCH'S GENERAL ELECTIONS.

3. ENTENT OF SELF-CRITICISM BECAME EVIDENT DURING DEC 13 BERLIN SPD PARTY CONGRESS, WHEN CHAIRMAN OF SPD CAUCUS IN HOUSE OF REPS, DR. WOLFGANG HAUS,
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BLAMED "SELF-SATISFACTION, SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS,

PETTINESS AND BUREAUCRACY" AS PRINCIPAL REASONS FOR SOCIALIST REVERSES AT POLLS ON MARCH 2. HAUS ADMITTED THAT "PARTY BOOK OFFICIALS" (I.E., BUREAUCRATS WHO USE SPD MEMBERSHIP AS SPRINGBOARD FOR PROMOTION) WERE PROBLEM (AS CDU CLAIMED PRIOR TO GENERAL ELECTION). HAUS FELT IT NECESSARY TO IMPROVE IMAGE OF SPD IN BERLIN AND TO ABANDON CONCEPT THAT GOVERNMENT AND PARTY WERE ONE. HE PROPOSED AS FIRST STEP THAT MEMBERS OF SPD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE IN BERLIN SHOULD SPEND MORE TIME ON THEIR PARTY JOB, AND FOR THIS REASON SUGGESTED THAT SENATORS SHOULD NOT BE ON THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

4. SENATOR RIEBSCHLAEGER (WHO IS ONE OF TWO DEPUTY SPD CHAIRMEN) VIGOROUSLY REJECTED HAUS' PROPOSALS. HE CLAIMED THEY WOULD BE USELESS IN TERMS OF IMPROVING THE SPD'S IMAGE. RIEBSCHLAEGER ALSO OPPOSED LEFT-WING PROPOSAL BASED ON BREMEN MODEL THAT SENATORS NOT BE MEMBERS OF HOUSE OF REPS. RIEBSCHLAEGER WARNED THE PARTY NOT TO GO FROM SELF-CRITICISM TO SELF-RESIGNATION. OTHER SPEAKER AT THE CONGRESS, HOWEVER, CALLED UPON THE PARTY TO REVIEW ITS PERSONNEL POLICIES AND TO IMPROVE THE SOCIALIST PUBLIC IMAGE. SOME DELEGATES SUGGESTED THAT PARTY SHOULD CONCENTRATE ON GRASS-ROOTS ISSUES AND SHOULD TRY TO SEPARATE THE PARTY FROM THE GOVERNMENT, TO RID ITSELF OF THE HANDICAP OF BEING CALLED THE "PARTY OF PUBLIC SERVICES". GOVMAYOR SCHUETZ AND OTHERS, HOWEVER, STRESSED THAT THE PARTY MUST CONTINUE TO CONCENTRATE ON NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ISSUES TO PRESERVE BERLIN'S ROLE IN WORLD AFFAIRS. TO THIS END, THE DELEGATES VOTED FOR A RESOLUTION CALLING ON THE SENAT TO BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE GDR TO IMPROVE THE VISITS ARRANGEMENT AND TO REDUCE THE COMPULSORY MINIMUM CURRENCY EXCHANGE ON A STEP-BY-STEP BASIS.

5. HERZ, WHO AS HE POINTED OUT TO MISOFF, IS NO FRIEND OF HAUS', CLAIMED THAT HAUS WAS TRYING TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CREATE A PROFILE FOR HIMSELF. HE ADMITTED, HOWEVER, THAT MUCH OF WHAT HAUS HAD TO SAY MEETED SAYING AND ADDED THAT FIRST YEAR AFTER AN ELECTION IS THE ONLY TIME THE PARTY CAN AFFORD TO INDULGE IN SUCH SELF-CRITICISM, REGARDLESS OF HOW USEFUL.

6. COMMENT: SPD FORTUNES IN BERLIN ARE WANING DESPITE ATTEMPTS TO ATTRIBUTE TO LORENZ KIDNAPPING

ITS LOSS OF LARGEST PARTY STATUS IN LAST ELECTIONS.
DESPITE OVERWHELMING RESPECT FOR SCHUETZ, BERLINERS
FEEL INCREASINGLY THE SPD OF REUTER HAS OVER
TIME TURNED INTO A CAREERIST SPRINGBOARD FOR PEOPLE
LOOKING FOR BETTER JOBS. THE OLD IDEALISM AND
VERVE, ENGENDERED BY CRISIS, IS NO LONGER THERE
AND THE COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN TOP AND BOTTOM SEEM
TO HAVE ATROPHIED. IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO REVERSE
THIS TREND, BUT SPD IS AT LEAST TRYING.
GEORGE

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